Shopping orientation and ideology towards shopping experience among *'shopaholics'* in bangalore

– An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The Indian retail industry has been affected by economic slowdown, high interest rates and the liquidity crunch, which together put pressure on consumer discretionary expenditure. In such a volatile situation, a study was felt necessary in one of the modern metros in the country to identify the latest retail trends with inputs on the shopping habits of people. The choice was Bangalore (Bengaluru) which is one of the fast growing retail markets as well. It is felt by the researchers that this study will supply necessary information on what's to be done next to keep the retail momentum going?. This research is a major break-through since it indicates certain areas of retail operations which are not frequently addressed by many of the research works in Retailing.

The Indian retail industry has been affected by economic slowdown, high interest rates and the liquidity crunch, which together put pressure on consumer discretionary expenditure. Amid these pressures, most retailers have experienced a drop in footfall and demand, reflected in declining store sales and greater time to break even for new stores. In a deteriorating macroeconomic climate, retailers may be forced to give discounts and promotional offers to maintain volumes, which will drive down margins. For those retailers who maintain a considerable yet significant difference in their retail strategy, all times are good times.

These retailers achieve immunity to any of the environmental factors by focusing their efforts on understanding the customers and offering the best of shopping experience to them from time to time. Several changes are there on the demand side due to increased per capita income, changing lifestyle and increased product / brand availability.

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In such a volatile situation, a study was felt necessary in one of the modern metros in the country. The choice was Bangalore (Bengaluru) which is the IT capital of the country and one of the fast growing retail markets as well. The focus of this study is to identify the latest retail trends with inputs on the shopping habits of people over there. It is felt by the researchers that this study will supply necessary information on *what's to be done next to keep the retail momentum going?*.

Bangalore- The affluent city...

The retail sector in Bangalore is witnessing an explosive growth. The reason for the retail boom is the city's growing affluence. In the last 10 years Bangalore's population has increased around 30 per cent; it is ranked the seventh most affluent city in India. It is estimated that over one-third of the households in Bangalore have an annual expenditure between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh, while 40 per cent of the city's population has annual incomes ranging between Rs 70,000 and Rs 1.4 lakhs. The 15-45 age group in this city is a retailer's delight.

This city is an international IT address which is why it is referred to as 'silicon valley of India'. The IT-led revolution in Bangalore has led to an immigration of people from across the country and even expatriates to the city. This new population is characterized by upper-class double income families with high purchasing power. Their discerning tastes and demands have opened avenues for new-age retailing in the city. Bangalore has traditionally been a leader in supermarkets which was initiated by the then RPG Group's Food World outlets.

Also, the concept of large format, standalone retail stores like Big Bazaar, Globus, Westside and Shoppers Stop was made popular in the city. International food retail giants like McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, KFC etc., have their outlets in the hi-streets of this city. Of late Bangalore has seen a perceptible shift towards the establishment of large hypermarkets and urban malls. Encouraged by the success of the existing malls, many developers are going ahead with their plans of creating new mall space in the city. Bangalore is witnessing huge demand for space from a large range of retailers. Though the current share of Bangalore in the organised retail space stands at 5%, the city is going to witness exponential growth of organised retail activities which will increase its share in the near future. This city holds a share of 5% of the total organized retail space in the country which is 5.87 mn sq.ft. This contribution is expected to grow further and Bangalore has emerged as a modern retail hub of South India' these days.

This study was conducted with ***'shopaholics'*** as respondents, the term refers to those who have compulsive shopping behavior. Though it is often referred to as a shopping disorder, for the purpose of this study it is taken in the positive sense to denote those who have high desire, frequency and passion for shopping. It is said that Princess Diana was also a shopaholic.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the shopping orientation of 'shopaholics' in Bangalore
- To study their shopping behavior with reference to modern retailing
- To analyze their ideology towards shopping experience in modern retail stores.

Research Methodology

A sample of 44 'shopaholics' was selected in Bangalore. ***'Snowball sampling'*** was employed which is a technique for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. The samples were approached with a pre-tested questionnaire which contains easy-to-understand and answerable list of research items. Appropriate statistical tools and tests were administered to draw meaningful interpretations which satisfy the objectives set for the study.

Discussion

The typical respondent of this study is a **male**, aged **below 30 Yrs, married** and **salaried** with monthly family income of **above Rs.20000**. *Whom are they taking along while go for shopping*, finds lots of significance since the influence of companions on purchasing decisions is possible. When the analysis of shopping companions is done across demographic variables interesting details were collected. These can be referred to table-1.

Male respondents mostly shop with their friends and children. Some prefer to shop alone. In the case of female respondents, friends and spouse accompany them mostly. None of them go alone. As it is obvious that, shopping is considered to be a fun-filled activity, going with friends justifies it. In the case of age group, again friends are the companions for those who are aged 30 and below. But 31-40 age group shop with their spouse and children where as 41-50 age group either go alone or go with their children. This has huge implications for the retailers as when friends are the companions, the shoppers tend to be more relaxed and fun-loving than other companions. So it is necessary to design the shopping experiences accordingly.

The association between the average time and money spent on shopping is discussed in Table-2. A correlation test was administered to identify the nature of association between these two variables. The Pearson correlation value is 0.472 and is significant at 0.01 level. This means that these two variables are positively correlated. It can be concluded that those who spend more time spend more money and vice versa.

At the next level, the type of products mostly purchased by the respondents was analyzed. As per the data given in Table-3, two major demographic factors viz., gender and age group of the respondents are associated with the product types. It is clear from the table-3 that female respondents mostly buy groceries, whereas male respondents buy food & snacks followed by accessories. Among the age groups, 'below 20 yrs' category, buy food & snacks and accessories; among '21-30 years' it is accessories; '31-40 years' age group buy grocery; whereas '41-50 yrs' group buy garments and accessories. On the overall basis, Accessories is the product category which is purchased mostly. Grocery and Food & Snacks are in second and third ranks respectively.

As far as the factors that decide the choice of retail store is concerned, it is the 'Trust factor' deciding the choice in most of the cases (38.6% of respondents indicated), followed by 'popularity' and 'location'.

The respondents were asked to mark their specific expectation from retailers. On the whole, most of the respondents expect quality products from retailers (36.4% indicated), followed by attractive promotions (25%) and prices below MRP (15.9%). This shows that the respondents are quality, promotion and price conscious which the retailers must satisfy.

When the analysis is done for specific age groups of the respondents (refer Table-4), it is found that those in 'below 20 yrs' category expect prices below MRP and product variety; the next age group 21-30 yrs, expect attractive promotions, 31-40 yrs group and 41-50 yrs expect product quality. Interestingly customer service is not found anywhere in the list of top priority, which may be because they are much satisfied with that.

There was an open ended question put forward to the respondents i.e.,' for the best of shopping experiences, what are the areas you think a retailer should concentrate on?' There were different types of responses and finally when all are grouped, it is found that ***parking*** is one area where the respondents expect retailer to concentrate. In a city like Bangalore it is quite obvious that parking is a nightmare for almost all those who go by their own vehicles. Following this, ***better interiors*** and ***quick billing and check out*** were indicated by the respondents. This implies that the retailers need to concentrate on all these factors in order to provide the best of shopping experience to the customers.

Table-5, indicates the type of shopping episodes of the respondents. It is a fact that each of the shopping episode will be of different kind. Some may be relaxing, some hurrying, some other may be enjoyable and entertaining too. It was felt by the researchers that the category of shopping episode will influence the shopping experience of the respondents. It is found that for most of them (25%) it is Exciting, considerable no. of respondents felt that they had episodes that were hurrying (20.5%). Interestingly around 15.9% felt it was well-planned. Very few (4.5%) said it was enjoyable. This must be taken seriously by the retailers. Though shopping as an activity is considered as a pleasurable out-door activity, still most of the episodes are not considered so.

The respondents were asked to mention about pleasant surprises expected from retailers. Most of them (31.8%) expect **loyalty programmes** from the retailers. In fact a country like India where loyalty is considered to be a rare phenomenon, it is a surprising response from the sample. May be if such loyalty programmes are there, then retailers may expect their customers to show store loyalty.

Interestingly, the respondents were asked to mention about the most irritating experience they had with retailers. The results show that ***inattentive sales staff*** (31.8%), ***non-availability of products/brands*** (29.5%), and ***inordinate delay in billing/check-out*** (25%) are the most irritating experiences for the respondents. The retailers must take a note of this and try to avoid such disappointments to their customers.

The factors which might influence the shopping factors such as external store environment, internal store environment, services offered, merchandise strategies, store employees, personal factors were listed and the respondents were asked to mark their opinion. The results are as follows: Most of them (54.5%) said external store environment has no influence on the shopping experience. In contrast to this, all the respondents (100%) opined that internal store environment will influence the shopping experience. As far as the services/facilities offered to the shoppers is considered, 59.1% felt they have influence on shopping experience.

A massive no. of respondents (34 out of 44 – 77.3%) felt that merchandise strategies of the retailer will influence the shopping experience. Surprisingly majority of the respondents i.e., 61.4% felt that store employees will have no influence on the shopping experience. Similarly, 56.8% felt personal factors have no influence on shopping experience. Based on the majority of responses the results are grouped in Table-6.

Accordingly, the internal store environment has the maximum level of agreement that it will influence the shopping experience; Merchandise strategies of the retailer has the second maximum agreement level; Services/facilities offered by the retailer has the third maximum level of agreement. Store employees and personal factors have least level of agreement relatively.

Findings and Implications

By and large the study has indicated the shopping orientation and ideology of respondents towards shopping experience in Bangalore. The major findings and implications for retailers are discussed below:

- Mostly shoppers are accompanied by their friends irrespective of gender. Among the age groups there is some difference with respondents aged above 30 mostly taken their spouse or children as shopping companions.
- On an average, there is a tendency for respondents to spend more than 1hr on shopping and spend more than Rs.1000. However, it is found that there is a positive relation existing between time spent and money spent by the respondents.
- On the overall basis, 'Accessories' is the product category which is purchased mostly. 'Grocery' and 'Food & Snacks' are in second and third ranks respectively.
- Respondents choose the retail store based on trust, popularity and location.
- On the whole, most of the respondents expect quality products from retailers, followed by attractive promotions and prices below MRP. Interestingly customer service is not found anywhere in the list of top priority, which may be because they are much satisfied with that.
- Better parking facilities are expected by the respondents from retailers. Following this better interiors and quick billing/check-out are mentioned.
- Most of the respondents categorize their shopping episodes as exciting & hurrying.
- To make them happy, respondents expect loyalty programmes from the retailers.
- Inattentive sales staff, non-availability of products/brands and inordinate delay in billing/check-out are referred to as irritating shopping experiences by the respondents.
- Respondents indicate that ***internal store environment***; ***merchandise strategies*** and ***service / facilities offered*** will influence the shopping experience to a greater extent and have opined that ***store employees*** and ***personal factors*** have least influence on shopping experience.

From all the above the retailers are expected to go for experiential retailing strategies wherein specifically they can concentrate on the following:

- Highly focused and customized retail strategies wherein the expectations of the store customers are thoroughly understood and met. Continuous feedback from customers will help the retailers in this regard. Further introduction of loyalty programmes, providing spacious and convenient parking facilities preferably by the side of the store is the need of the hour.

- Since internal store environment is given much importance by the respondents, the retailers are expected to work on improving it on a regular basis in order to eliminate boredom. Theme based experience can be tried to relate it with an occasion, concept etc
- The merchandise strategies of the retailers should be reviewed periodically to avoid the disappointment due to non-availability of products/brands.
- Orienting the store staff on the importance of customer service is again a major requirement as respondents feel inattentive sales staff will irritate them.
- Since most of the shopping episodes are hurrying in nature, retailers should help the customer to shop with easy by consuming less time. Display of information relating to purchase, sophistication in billing, proper easy to operate shopping aids, lifts/escalators are all necessary to help such shoppers.

ü As there is willingness among respondents to spent more time and money retailers are expected to make use of this attitude of the shoppers. Retaining them inside the store is a multi-pronged strategy where they should employ all the elements of retail mix effectively.

Conclusion

The experiential retailing strategy is the contemporary retail marketing strategy to cope up with emerging competition in the retail market. Any tangible store difference is susceptible due to the immediate imitation by competitors. Hence, the longevity of this difference is at huge risk. In these circumstances retailers can think about some innovative methods of differentiating the store from the rest of the market. For this 'experiential retailing' will be the best platform wherein the retailers can create a vibrant, enthusiastic and feel-good atmosphere to the shoppers thereby keeping their morale very high.

With the competition heating up both in the product and in the retailing industries, there are certain areas that demand immediate attention of the retailers. This includes, designing of retail outlets strategically, focus on customized retailing, thrust on areas such as sales force training, achieving professionalism in the entire range of operations, innovative practices to add value to the customers, effective Customer Relationship Management in place etc., Once these strategies are finalized then the retailers should decide on how are they going to be different from others.

Given these realities, this research is a major break-through since it indicates certain areas which are not frequently addressed by many of the research works in Retailing. The future research works can take lead from this work and further focus their approach into experiential retailing by probing into specific retail elements and related shopper behavior.

Table-1 Demographic Factors Vs Shopping Companions

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS		FRIENDS	SPOUSE	CHILDREN	NONE
GENDER	Male	15	0	6	4
	Female	11	7	1	0
	Total	26	7	7	4
AGE GROUP(in Yrs.)	Below 20	13	0	0	0
	21-30	13	0	0	0
	31-40	0	7	3	0
	41-50	0	0	4	4
	Total	26	7	7	4

Table-2 Average money Vs Average time spent on shopping

Shopping Variables		Average Time Spent			
		Below 1/2 hr	Up to 1hr	More than 1hr	Total
Average Money Spent	Below Rs.500	5	5	3	13
	Rs.501-1000	6	9	7	22
	Rs.1001-1500	0	0	9	9
	Total	11	14	19	44

Table-3 Demographic Factors Vs Type of products purchased

Demography Vs Type of Products		**Products Purchased**					
		Grocery	**Garments**	**Food & Snacks**	**Gift articles**	**Accessories**	**Total**
Gender of the respondents	**Male**	**0**	**4**	**10**	**2**	**9**	25
	Female	**11**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**6**	19
	Total	11	6	10	2	15	**44**
Age of the respondents	**Below 20 yrs**	0	0	7	0	6	13
	21-30 yrs	3	2	0	2	6	13
	31-40 yrs	8	0	2	0	0	10
	41-50 yrs	0	4	1	0	3	8
	Total	11	6	10	2	15	**44**

Table-4 Age Vs Expectation from Retailers

Age Vs Expectation		**What is expected from Retailers**					
		Price Below MRP	Product Variety	Customer Service	Product Quality	Attractive Promotions	Total
Age of the Respondents	Below 20 yrs	7	6	0	0	0	13
	21-30 yrs	0	0	2	0	11	13
	31-40 yrs	0	0	2	8	0	10
	41-50 yrs	0	0	0	8	0	8
	Total	7	6	4	16	11	**44**

Table-5 Type of Shopping Episodes of Respondents

Type of shopping episode	Frequency	Percent
Usual & routine	5	11.4
Well-planned	7	15.9
Window shopping	4	9.1
Exciting	11	25.0
Hurrying	9	20.5
Relaxed	6	13.6
Enjoyable	2	4.5
Total	44	100.0

Table-6, Level of Agreement for factors influencing Shopper

Factors influencing Shopping Experience	% of respondents marked 'YES'	Rank based on majority of agreement
Store Environment - External	45.5	4
Store Environment - Internal	100	1
Services/Facilities offered	59.1	3
Merchandise Strategies of the retailers	77.3	2
Store Employees	38.6	6
Personal Factors	43.2	5

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